



March 1890

THE PARENTS' REVIEW:

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

Editorial.

"The children walk every day; they are never out less than an hour when the weather is suitable." That is better than nothing; so is this:—An East London schoolmistress notices the pale looks of one of her best girls. "Have you had any dinner, Nellie?" "Ye-es" (with hesitation). "What have you had?" "Mother gave Jessie and me a halfpenny to buy our dinners, and we bought a haporth of aniseed drops—they go further than bread"—with an appeal in her eyes against possible censure for extravagance. Children do not develop at their best upon aniseed drops for dinner, nor upon an hour's "constitutional" daily. Possibly science will bring home to us more and more the fact, that animal life, pent under cover, is supported under artificial conditions, just as is plant life in a glass house. Here is where most Continental nations have the advantage over us; they keep up the habit of out-of-door life; and, as a consequence, the average Frenchman, German, Italian, Bulgarian, is more joyous, more simple, and more hardy than the average Englishman. Climate? Did not Charles II.—and he knew—declare for the climate of England because you could be abroad "more hours in the day and more days in the year" in England than "in any other country"? We lose sight of the fact that we are *not* like that historical personage who "lived upon nothing but victuals and drink." "You can't live upon air!" we say to the invalid who can't eat. No; we cannot live upon air; but, if we must choose among the three

sustainers of life, air will support us the longest. We know all about it; we are deadly weary of the subject; let but the tail of your eye catch "oxygenation" on a page, and the well-trained organ skips that paragraph of its own accord. No need to tell Macaulay's schoolboy, or anybody else, how the blood of the body is brought to the lungs and there spread about in a huge extent of innumerable "pipes" that it may be exposed momentarily to the oxygen in the air; how the air is made to momentarily blow upon the blood, so spread out in readiness, by the bellows-like action of inspiration; how the air penetrates the very thin walls of the pipes; and then, behold, a magical (or chemical) transmutation; the worthless sewage of the system becomes on the instant the rich vivifying fluid whose function it is to build up the tissues of muscle and nerve. And the Prospero that wears the cloak? Oxygen, his name; and the marvel that he effects within us some fifteen times in the course of a minute is possibly without parallel in the whole array of marvels which we "tot up" with easy familiarity, setting down "life," and carrying—a cypher!

* * * *

We know all about it; what we forget, perhaps, is, that even oxygen has its limitation: nothing can act but where it is, and, waste attends work,—hold true for this vital gas as for other matters. Fire and lamp and breathing beings are all consumers of the oxygen which sustains them. What follows? Why, that this element, which is present in the ratio of twenty-three parts to the hundred in pure air, is subject to an enormous drain within the four walls of a house, where the air is more or less stationary. We are not speaking just now of the vitiation of the air—only of the drain upon its life-sustaining element. Think, again, of the heavy drain upon the oxygen which must support the multitudinous fires and many breathing beings congregated in a large town! "What follows?" is a strictly vital question. Man can enjoy the full measure of vigorous joyous existence possible to him only when his blood is fully aerated; and this takes place when the air he inhales contains its full complement of oxygen. Is it too much to say that vitality is reduced, other things being equal, in proportion as persons are house-dwellers rather than open-air dwellers? The impoverished air sustains life at a low and feeble level; wherefore, in the great towns,

stature dwindles, the chest contracts, men hardly live to see their children's children. True, we must needs have houses for shelter from the weather by day, and for rest at night; but, in proportion as we cease to make our houses "comfortable," as we regard them merely as necessary shelters when we cannot be out of doors, shall we enjoy to the full the vigorous vitality possible to us.

* * * *

Parents of pale-faced town children, think of these things! The gutter children who feed on the pickings of the streets are better off (and healthier looking) in this one respect than your cherished darlings, because they have more of the first essential of life—air. There is some circulation of air even in the slums of the city, and the child who spends his days in the streets is better supplied with oxygen than he who spends most of his hours in the unchanged air of a spacious apartment. But it is not the air of the streets the children want. It is the delicious life-giving air of the country. The outlay of the children in living is enormously in excess of the outlay of the adult. The endless activity of the child, while it develops muscle, is kept up at the expense of very great waste of tissue. It is the blood which carries material for the reparation of this loss. The child must *grow*, every part of him, and it is the blood which brings material for the building up of new tissues. Again, we know that the brain is, out of all proportion to its size, the great consumer of the blood supply, but the brain of the child, what with its eager activity, what with its twofold growth, is insatiable in its demands!

* * * *

"I feed Alice on beef tea, cod liver oil, and all sorts of nourishing things, but it's very disheartening, the child doesn't gain flesh!" It is probable that Alice breathes for twenty-two of the twenty-four hours the impoverished and more or less vitiated air pent within the four walls of a house. The child is practically starving; for the food she eats is very imperfectly and inadequately converted into the aerated blood that feeds the tissues of the body.

* * * *

And if she is suffering from bodily inanition, what about the eager, active, curious, hungering mind of the little girl? "Oh, she has her lessons regularly every day." Probably; but lessons

which deal with words—only the *signs* of things—are not what the child wants. There is no knowledge so appropriate to the early years of a child as that of the name and look and behaviour *in situ* of every natural object he can get at. It is in the effort to help parents to impart the rudiments of Nature's lore to their children that we devote so much space, month by month, to descriptions of the face of the heavens and the face of the earth. The Star-Map should be a delight to many a thoughtful child who has long wished for the power to identify the glorious objects of the heavens; and the notes of the month, from the pen of the accomplished and sympathetic naturalist—the editor of *Science Gossip*—should give delight to many a ramble, and occasion for many a long glorious day in the open. That these articles should be merely *read*, should be used to add to the floating capital of *simulated* knowledge which most of us trade upon, would be a means of defeating the earnest purpose for which they are produced.

* * * *

"He hath so done His marvellous works that they ought to be had in remembrance."

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:
This child I to myself will take:
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

* * *

"She shall be sportive as the fawn,
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.

* * *

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

"The whole of the 'Editorial' and an undue proportion of articles devoted to a single topic!" Spring is upon us, and "Urgency" is our excuse.

Infant Development.

BY DR. JAMES WARD.

From a Lecture delivered in Cambridge.

Not a little harm has, I suspect, been done by the over-statement we often hear, "Change of work is as good as play." It is no such thing. Good, no doubt, it is, and better than entire idleness in many cases; but play is work for children, *i.e.*, it is active occupation, and change to this form of work they require at pretty frequent intervals, if their other work is to have any zest in it. A healthy child, three years old, perhaps runs two or three miles in the course of the day, but would be seriously tired if it had to run a quarter of a mile at once. Children are soon exhausted and soon refreshed. And we have to remember that their brains, like the rest of their bodies, have double work to do, where the work of the adult brain is only single; the child's brain has both to act and to grow. Nay, it has to grow in two respects, both necessitating frequent relaxation or entailing certain injury. It has to grow in bulk, and it has to grow in complexity of structure. Besides sufficient, but not excessive exercise, the chief condition of growth in bulk is well-nourished and well-aerated blood, and with this long confinement is incompatible. The chief condition of the other and higher growth is due rest after exercise to enable the new nervous connections to perfect themselves. The brain is not a delicate organ in the sense of being easily hurt by work, and even hard work; but it is extremely delicate in this sense, that all forcing and excessive strain deteriorate it in strength, and still more, perhaps, in quality; it is in this like a good watch, which will serve you your lifetime with care, but is almost sure to snap somewhere if you overwind it. Parents and headmasters and mistresses must have a real acquaintance, though it need not be profound, with the physiological laws on which bodily growth